Visiting Robert Francis with My Son

Stuart Friebert
Two Poems · Stuart Friebert

VISITING ROBERT FRANCIS WITH MY SON

for S. & R.F.

We ask about the crayon poems on the desk. There’s quite a heap of them, you can’t take your eyes away. Oh, he says, I try to write one every day now. I surely like Crayolas, doesn’t everyone? He reaches over but knocks the orange on the floor. Don’t bother, please, I’d like to fetch it, he seems to say and takes many moments to lower his arthritic shape down notch by notch to his knee by hanging on tight with both hands to the desk. We look away while he takes many more moments getting back up—There it is, he says, Now I can do another one in orange. We wave off an offer to make tea.

It’s been the usual sweet sweet time everyone reports having in his company, from the walk about the yard to the request for a photo with him standing between those two headlights he’s rescued from an abandoned car and stationed on the grass before the door. We’re worried we’re tiring him but he says, Any last questions before you go? Well, my son wonders, taking in all of the woodenness to the place, worrying about fire of course, Do you keep all your poems here, sir? No, my boy, Francis winks, They’re all in a nice safety deposit box in the town bank, thank you.